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Alberta Society of Artists: The First Seventy Years. By Kathy E. Zimon. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000. Appendix, notes, bibliography, index, photographs. xii + 288 pp. \$49.95.

Kathy E. Zimon, Fine Arts Librarian Emeritus at the University of Calgary, has launched a new career as a researcher on Alberta art and artists. Her first major work, on the Alberta Society of Artists, is a valuable accounting of names, dates, issues, and images of an important aspect of the history of art in Alberta and a timely contribution to the study of art institutions in Canada.

Zimon's study unfolds chronologically with a lively narrative of the personalities and the issues at stake in the founding and maintenance of the ASA. She offers perspective on local conditions, analyzing why it was so important to artists that a society be established, and on the broader issue of artists' societies in Canada and their relationship to public galleries. More of this examination would have been welcomed, especially in comparison to Manitoba and Saskatchewan where significant

arts organizations, including Canada's first arts council and the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops, were established concurrently. The story of the ASA is not a general history of art in Alberta, as Zimon cautions, but of member artists whose aesthetic and professional values lined up with the conventions of an artists' society. Nevertheless, Zimon occasionally loses her footing in this area, claiming, for example, that "sculpture is not, and never has been, a popular medium in Alberta art, nor has it figured prominently in the history of the society." On the contrary, modernist sculpture in Alberta has garnered international recognition since the 1970s.

Zimon's chronological account is followed by two thematic chapters, the first devoted to women's experiences with the Society, including their responses to the ASA's early aversion to women's membership. The second, accompanied by excellent color reproductions, surveys the work of ASA members over the past seventy years. Although an urban group based in Calgary and Edmonton, wilderness has been a dominant theme among society members. While prairie and mountains are represented, the foothills have been the most popular motif.

The value of Zimon's book lies in the historical facts she has meticulously gathered and shared, including a study of the society's idiosyncratic newsletter *Highlights*, and in the richness of the appendices of Society documents. Written primarily for ASA members to celebrate the Society's seventieth anniversary in 2001, the book will appeal to readers interested in the social dynamics of the visual arts on the Canadian prairies in the twentieth century.

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